K. Great Britain & Ireland

STATE OF THE COUNTRY

IN THE

AUTUMN OF 1798.

THIS FORTRESS BUILT BY NATURE FOR HERSELF
AGAINST INFECTION AND THE HAND OF WAR.
SHAKSPEARE.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. WRIGHT, NO. 169, PICCADILLY.

1798.

153

BRITISH MUSEUM

44.
3. 29.
478.

STATE OF THE COUNTRY, &c.

IT is now nearly ſix years ſince we have been engaged in a conteſt, the moſt eventful and ſanguinary of any which are recorded in hiſtory. The long-eſtabliſhed ſyſtem of Europe has been ſhaken to its very foundation. The Auſtrian Netherlands have become an integral part of France: and ſhe has extended her limits to the Alps and to the Rhine. She has ſubjugated the Republicks of Holland and Switzerland, ſo long objects of intereſt and attention to every country of Europe. She has changed the whole face of Italy; annihilated Venice; revolutionized Genoa; and eſtabliſhed Republicks, after her

own model, in Lombardy, and at Rome. She has reduced the Pope to become a wanderer in foreign countries. She has corrupted Pruſſia; intimidated Vienna; and compelled Spain, firſt to conclude a peace, and then an offenſive alliance with her. But her views have been by no means confined to one quarter of the globe. She has defrauded and inſulted America; and has planted the tri-coloured flag on the caſtle of Grand Cairo, as a previous ſtep to the invaſion and overthrow of every empire of the Eaſt.

Amidſt theſe ſcenes of ruin and devaſtation, the iſland of Great Britain alone has ſucceſsfully reſiſted her power. The Britiſh empire has not only been preſerved entire, but our Foreign dominion has been extended.

By

By the capture of Martinico, St. Lucia, and Tobago, we have ſecured our Weſt India commerce, and prevented the contagion of Jacobiniſm from ſpreading to our own colonies.

By the conqueſt of the Cape of Good Hope, and Ceylon, we have ſecured, and even ſtrengthened our Indian empire.

We have gained over France, and her dependants, four of the moſt brilliant naval victories, of which there is any example, in the hiſtory of the world.

We have taken, burnt, and deſtroyed, more than ſixty ſhips of the line, and more than a hundred frigates.

We are in poſſeſſion, at the preſent moment, of the undiſputed command of the ocean in every quarter of the world. We are in the act of blocking up the Dutch fleet in the Texel, the French fleet in Breſt, and the Spaniſh fleet in Cadiz; and the laſt of our ſeries of Victories, the glorious battle of the Nile, has given a death blow to the naval power of France, in the Mediterranean.

We have annihilated the commerce of our enemies, and added immenſely to our own.

Whilſt perſecution and bloodſhed have marked the progreſs of French arms and French power; We have afforded an aſylum to the diſtreſſed and afflicted of all countries. The perſecuted Prieſt, the baniſhed Magiſtrate, the Royaliſt Officer, grown old in ſervice, have all here found ſhelter and ſupport.

Their wants have been relieved, their ſufferings have been pitied, and their merits have been reſpected.

In this ſtate of things we ought to offer up our prayers of thankſgiving to Almighty God, by whoſe aid alone we have been enabled to oppoſe ſucceſsfully the deſigns of our enemies. And we ought to feel reſpect and attachment to that Government, which has been the inſtrument, in the hands of Heaven, to effect our deliverance, and to conduct us to ſafety and to glory. What muſt be the tree, which has produced ſuch fruit? What muſt be the nature of thoſe inſtitutions, which have ſhewn themſelves *ſtrong*, whilſt every thing around them has proved *weak?*

To enable us, however, to form a juſt eſtimate of the conduct of Government, let us take a review of the principles which, from the commencement of this conteſt, appear to have actuated them.

It is well known, that at the period alluded to, the country was divided (as it ſtill is) into two political parties, who entertained very different ſentiments, reſpecting the French revolution, and the origin of the war. The Party who oppoſed the meaſures of Government, continually maintained " *that France never wiſhed for war; that ſhe had been unjuſtly forced into it; that ſhe acted on principles purely defenſive; that every power might make peace with her, who pleaſed; that there was as much ſecurity in peace, with her, as with many of the ancient governments of Europe; that all thoſe countries, who had been deſirous of remaining in a ſtate of neutrality, had found no difficulty in preſerving the accuſtomed relations of peace and amity with her; that ſhe was injured, rather than injuring; and that it was unjuſt in the greateſt degree, to impute to the Government of France, ſentiments which were contained in the ſpeeches of a few*

a few extravagant individuals. The party, who defended the war, and the meaſures of Government, connected with it, contended, *That the war was occaſioned by the unwarranted aggreſſion of France; that in defiance of the moſt ſolemn engagements, into which ſhe had entered not many months before, ſhe had ſeized upon the Auſtrian Netherlands and Savoy as conquered countries, and annexed them to her own dominions; that ſhe had violated the neutrality of Holland, whom ſhe knew* we *were bound by treaty to defend; that ſhe had proclaimed her intention of ſupporting the diſaffected in all countries againſt their reſpective governments; that ſhe had received and encouraged addreſſes from ſeditious ſocieties in Great Britain; that whilſt theſe different ſubjects of complaint were under diſcuſſion, ſhe had actually declared war againſt us; that the war, in fact, grew out of the revolution; that the object of France was to extend her power, and her principles*

ciples, over the whole world; that if any of the powers of Europe had been able to remain in a ſtate of neutrality, with her, it was, becauſe it could not be the intereſt of France, to engage herſelf in hoſtilities with all the world at once; but that if ſhe ſucceeded in cruſhing thoſe powers, with whom ſhe was actually at war, ſhe would then turn her arms againſt ſuch as had remained in peace.

We have now the conduct of France for a courſe of ſix years before our eyes. Which of theſe opinions does a fair review of it go to confirm? Is it in the treatment of conquered countries, that her MODERATION is to be found? appeal only to the wretched inhabitants of the provinces ſhe has ſubdued. Is it in her negotiations? look to the conferences at Liſle, and the correſpondence at Raſtadt. Is it in her deportment towards Neutral Powers? inquire of Genoa, of Venice, of Switzerland,

land, of America, and of Turkey. Every one of theſe Powers had either preſerved the ſtricteſt neutrality from the beginning of the War, or had even ſhewn a decided partiality, in ſome inſtances a degrading ſubmiſſion, to France. By them, therefore, the Oppoſition muſt admit that the character of the French Government has been tried, and let them decide the queſtion.

It would be difficult, at firſt view, to conceive what could be the object of France, in her conduct towards ſome of thoſe powers. Switzerland appeared to have nothing in her which could give France any alarm. She had conducted herſelf towards France, throughout, with the moſt humble, not to ſay abject deference and devotion. To revolutionize a country ſo circumſtanced, ſeemed to promiſe no adequate advantage; and to oppreſs the peaceable

able and happy inhabitants might have the effect of exciting a ſentiment of indignation throughout Europe; but the *Great Nation* had decreed it, and no ſubmiſſion, no remonſtrance, no conceſſion, could avail. She marches an army into the heart of their territory, and after a ſhort, but ſevere conflict, ſubverts the government, and devotes the country to pillage, devaſtation, and ruin.

America will afford an inſtance, equally ſtrong, with Switzerland, of the principles which govern the Directory. The diſtance of America from France, ſeemed to preclude the poſſibility of a difference between them on many points, which might occur between nations that were more contiguous; it was clearly the *intereſt* of France, to avoid ſuch a line of policy as might induce America, for her

her own ſecurity, to connect herſelf with Great Britain. The obligations which the French Rulers have never ceaſed to profeſs they owe America for the elements of their Revolution might incline them, it was ſuppoſed, to adopt a conciliatory policy towards this one Power: and certainly no Government could ſhew greater unwillingneſs to engage in hoſtilities, than that of the United States. Yet even America is pillaged, inſulted, and compelled to take up arms in her own defence.

The conduct of France indeed, has even gone beyond the apprehenſion of thoſe who were moſt awake, from the beginning, to the danger of her principles and extent of her deſigns; and who ſaw in War the only means of reſiſting them: and now at leaſt it muſt be admitted, by every perſon not abſolutely deaf to the leſſons of experience, that the

principle on which the War was originally defended, has been completely verified; that the views of France *were* of the nature they were then maintained to be; and that it would have been fatal to the happineſs, and perhaps to the exiſtence of Great Britain, if the line of conduct then recommended by OPPOSITION had been adopted. Muſt not that miniſter have been inſane, who would have adviſed us to ſit by, patient ſpectators of the aggreſſion of France on all other Powers, until the time ſhould come, when ſhe ſhould be pleaſed to inform us, that it was our turn to be devoured?

If we have reaſon to approve of our Foreign policy, we ſhall find, upon examination, that we have not leſs reaſon to be ſatisfied with our internal ſyſtem. The apprehenſion which for ſeveral years has prevailed throughout the coun-

try,

try, that we were in conſiderable danger, from the progreſs of Jacobin Principles, appeared to a great majority both in and out of Parliament to be grounded upon evidence ſufficient to juſtify meaſures of precaution; but it was uniformly treated by OPPOSITION as unfounded. THEY have continually maintained, *That the Correſponding, and other Societies of the ſame deſcription, in England, were deſirous only of Parliamentary Reform; that the United Iriſhmen limited their views to Catholick Emancipation*, as it is called, *and Parliamentary Reform; that the Chiefs of the latter were moſt virtuous Patriots, and as averſe from all idea of pure Democracy, or from any deſire to countenance foreign invaſion, as the Members of the Engliſh* OPPOSITION.—Let us now ſee how the fact ſtands.—The PLOT is at laſt completely unravelled: and we have the diſtinct admiſſion of the Chiefs of the Iriſh Union, that their object was *pure Demo-*

 cracy;

cracy; that, for the purpoſe of obtaining it, they had connected themſelves with France, and had ſolicited the *aſſiſtance of a French Army*, and that, in their opinion, the people of Ireland *cared not a jot for either Catholic Emancipation or Parliamentary Reform.*

We have ſufficient proof from the ſame ſource*, that there is A PARTY in Great Britain, acting

* It appears by the Appendix to the Report of the Committee of the Houſe of Commons of Ireland, that Binns, a very active member of the Correſponding Society of London, was ſent to Dublin in the courſe of laſt winter, with an Addreſs from the United Britons to the United Iriſhmen; that he was introduced to a ſociety of United Iriſhmen by a perſon named Quigley. The Brother of this Binns, a member likewiſe of the Correſponding Society, was afterwards detected in endeavouring to eſcape from Great Britain to France, in company with O'Conner and the ſame Quigley, at the very time that there was found in the pocket of the latter, an Addreſs to the French Directory,

acting upon ſimilar principles. But ſuch proof was indeed unneceſſary: for who can recollect the dreadful mutiny in the fleet and the confeſſions that were on that occaſion made, by ſome of the unfortunate ſufferers; who can recollect the regular plan that was laid at the ſame time, for creating a ſimilar mutiny in the army by circulating reports on the ſame day, in places the moſt remote, that a general riſing of the army had actually taken place; and ſtill perſiſt to doubt that there exiſted a Jacobinical Conſpiracy in this country to ſubvert the Government? or that the meaſures

Directory, urging them to invade this country; and it appears by the Report likewiſe, that Lord Edward Fitzgerald, about the ſame time, confeſſed to a friend, who was an United Iriſhman, that he had received letters from London, which informed him that the diſaffected who would riſe there on a common emergency amounted to ſeventeen thouſand, but that many more would come forward in caſe of actual invaſion.

of ſecurity which Parliament adopted to fruſtrate its deſigns, were loudly called for, by the atrocious and deſperate attempts of the moſt daring and flagitious traitors.

In Ireland, meaſures of precaution unfortunately proved inſufficient. The Conſpiracy, favoured by many circumſtances on which it is not neceſſary now to dwell, broke out there into acts of open rebellion: but the meaſures adopted by government for the purpoſe of ſuppreſſing it, appear to have been founded in the ſoundeſt wiſdom. The conſpiracy began in the North, and gradually extended itſelf Southwards. The policy of the Iriſh government, was to compel the conſpirators to declare themſelves in a particular province, before their ſchemes were ripe for execution, and before they had been able to make any conſiderable progreſs in corrupting the adjoining

ing provinces. In the autumn of 1796, and ſpring of 1797, the province of Ulſter was completely organized; but the conſpiracy had made little way, at that time, in any of the other provinces. In conſequence of the vigorous and ſalutary meaſures adopted by government, the United Iriſhmen of Ulſter were under the neceſſity of either renouncing their deſigns, or of riſing prematurely: they choſe the latter, and by the exertions which government were at that time enabled to make, the rebellion in Ulſter was ſo completely ſuppreſſed, that when in the preſent year, the inſurrection broke out in Leinſter, the province of Ulſter, with the exception of a very few places, remained in a ſtate of tranquility. The ſame policy has been adopted with equal ſucceſs in Leinſter. The conſpiracy had made aſtoniſhing progreſs throughout that province the beginning of this year: but the Iriſh Cabinet,

in conſequence of a thorough acquaintance with the plans of the rebels, had the prudence to adopt ſuch meaſures of prevention as rendered them deſperate. The criſis accordingly came on, and the whole ſtrength of Government was employed in cruſhing the rebellion in Leinſter, before the Chiefs of the Union were ready for action, and before they had been able to extend their deſigns to Connaught, or even in any very great extent, to Munſter.

Thus has GreatBritain, ſurrounded by enemies of every deſcription, been hitherto ſo fortunate as to baffle all their attempts. We have reſiſted the power of France abroad; We have preſerved peace and tranquility at home, notwithſtanding every attempt to diſturb it; and We have been ſucceſsful in ſuppreſſing a moſt daring and bloody Rebellion in our

Siſter

Siſter Kingdom.—But there are ſome who will ſay, that our great object was to deſtroy Jacobiniſm in France, and that in that object we have completely failed. My anſwer is, We have deſtroyed ONE ARM of Jacobiniſm, THE ARM by which ſhe was moſt capable of injuring us,—by the annihilation of her naval power.

It never was, nor ever could be pretended, by any one, that it was poſſible for Great Britain to ſucceed againſt France on the Continent, unleſs the Powers of the Continent were diſpoſed to perform their duty. No efforts have been wanting, on our part, to ſtimulate them to exertion. We have confederated them; we have ſubſidized them; we have entered into the moſt ſolemn treaties with them, to every article of which WE have remained faithful: but the treachery of ſome, the weakneſs of

others, the little jealouſies of all, have led them to ſacrifice their own honour, and their own ſecurity, to the moſt contemptible conſiderations. WE *have done our part, and ſhall, I truſt, continue to do it—let* THEM, *even now, do theirs, and* THE WORLD IS SAVED.

The enemies of the Britiſh Government, driven from every other poſt, endeavour to excite a clamour on account of the expences of the war. That all wars are expenſive, that this war has been greatly expenſive, cannot be denied: we ſhall find, however, a remarkable difference between the expences of the preſent and of any war that has preceded it. In former wars the expences of Government have been annually encreaſed; in this war they have lately undergone conſiderable diminution. But whatever at any period they may have been, could any part of them have been avoid-

ed, conſiſtently with the public ſafety? Look at the gigantic exertions of France, compare her efforts, in the preſent, with thoſe ſhe has made in any former war. Look at the expences which ſhe has incurred, for the purpoſe of deſtroying us, and then let us aſk ourſelves, —whether, upon the firſt view of the ſubject, we appear to have paid more than might be ſuppoſed requiſite for our preſervation.

It is certainly true, that every war appears to have been more expenſive than the preceding; and for very obvious reaſons. In proportion as a country increaſes in population, commerce, and every ſpecies of wealth, the prices of the different articles and commodities of life will be raiſed. The expences of individuals will accordingly be increaſed, and the expences of Government muſt always preſerve a proportion to the expences of individuals; the

the accumulation of our debt and increaſe of taxes which has been the conſequence of it, muſt undoubtedly have produced an important effect on all expences private and public: and as it has been our misfortune hitherto that our Debt, greatly increaſed as it has been during every war, has undergone very little diminution in each ſucceeding peace, the conſequence has been, that we have commenced a new war, with nearly the ſame burdens with which we concluded the former In this ſtate of things, ſuppoſing two wars, in which the exertions were exactly the ſame, the laſt will be found of courſe conſiderably more expenſive than that which preceded it.

The preſent Adminiſtration have, however, effectually guarded againſt the continuance of this evil recurring in future, if we ſhould be ſucceſsful in overcoming our preſent difficulties.

ties. They have been the firſt miniſters who, during a long and arduous war, have preſerved inviolate the SINKING FUND eſtabliſhed during the peace. But they have done more: in proportion as our debt has been increaſed, a SINKING FUND has been eſtabliſhed for the liquidation of it in a limited time. The whole SINKING FUND amounts at this time to nearly FOUR MILLIONS STERLING A-YEAR; a ſum ſo great, as would promiſe, in caſe of the reſtoration and continuance of peace, to relieve us from all our difficulties in no very long ſpace of time; and in the event of the continuance or renewal of war, it will accumulate in a very few years to ſuch an extent as would be ſufficient to enable us, with the aid of a WAR-TAX, to carry on any conteſt in which we may be engaged, without the neceſſity of any further increaſe of permanent debt.

We

We ſee, from what has been ſtated, that our preſent difficulties were inevitable; but if the country is true to itſelf, the perſeverance of the Miniſter will accompliſh the greateſt *deſideratum* in Britiſh policy. Our finances have always been conſidered as our vulnerable part: the errors which have made them ſo have at laſt been diſcovered; and we may be ſucceſsful, if we exert ourſelves at the preſent moment, in placing them upon ſuch a footing as may enable us to bid defiance, upon that ſcore, to all the deſigns of our enemies. The riſe of the publick funds, at a moment like the preſent, proves the confidence of men of property in the reſources of the country; and the benefits that may be expected to accrue from the annihilation of ſo large a portion of our debt by the redemption of the land tax, will have the effect of facilitating THE GREAT OBJECT of the

the Miniſter, and of enabling him to place the finances of Great Britain in a ſtate of ſecurity, hitherto unknown to the government of any country uo n the face of the earth.

Unanſwerable as the queſtion muſt be, there are ſome who will not fail to aſk us again and again, When ſhall we have peace?—Let theſe perſons aſk themſelves ſeriouſly, Whether they believe we have any choice? and, even if we had, let them look at ſuch of the neighbours of France, as are actually at peace with her, and aſk themſelves, Whether they think their ſituation is much to be envied?—That OUR CAUSE will finally triumph; that Religion will ſubdue Atheiſm; Virtue, Vice; and Order, Anarchy; we may conſider as certain: but how long the conflict may laſt, it is not in the power of MAN to determine.

We

We ſhould conſider how great are the means which Providence has placed in our hands:—We have a powerful and triumphant Navy, a gallant and ſpirited Army, an unparalleled Commerce, and a flouriſhing Revenue. It is our duty to uſe theſe advantages with wiſdom and firmneſs, and to ſupport any difficulties which may ariſe in the conteſt, with conſtancy and patience.

As often as France has ſhown the leaſt diſpoſition to return to A SYSTEM OF MODERATION, the Government of this country have endeavoured to avail themſelves of it, and to lay a foundation for peace. Hitherto their efforts have proved ineffectual; but the ſame policy will be adopted whenever THE DISPOSITION AND CONDUCT OF THE ENEMY will admit of it.

As

As long, however, as it ſhall appear to be the ſyſtem of France *to ſpread deſtruction over every part of the civilized world, to cruſh every government that diſputes her will, and to meaſure her rights only by her power*, it is a duty we owe to God, to ourſelves, and to the world at large, to employ our whole ſtrength in oppoſing her deſigns, and to aſſiſt and ſupport every ſtate which is deſirous, however late, of taking up arms in the common defence. We hope it will not be our fate to contend alone; but whatever be the conduct of other countries, our determination is taken. *They* may crouch.—*They* may temporize.—*They* may may ſubmit.—We *know our duty*.—We feel as Chriſtians and as Men. In the iſſue of the preſent conteſt, the exiſtence of all Religion and all Government, and the Rights of Human

Nature, are involved. We truſt We have the the ſpirit, We know We have the power, to defend them.

FINIS.